

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A system for storing and opening encased articles, comprising:
 - a container **[(12)]** configured to store at least one removable article encased within a protective seal **[(28)]**;
 - a seal cutting apparatus **[(40)]**, in combination with said container **[(12)]**, comprising:
 - a receiving channel **[(50)]** defined by a first edge **[(44)]** spaced apart from a substantially parallel second edge **[(48)]**;
 - a cutting member **[(60)]** including a cutting edge **[(62)]**, said cutting member (60) positioned so said cutting edge **[(62)]** extends between said first edge **[(44)]** and said second edge **[(48)]**;
 - wherein said receiving channel **[(50)]** is configured to slideably receive at least a portion of said seal **[(28)]** and said cutting edge **[(62)]** is configured to cooperatively cut said seal portion as it is inserted into and translated along said channel **[(50)]****[(; and)]**,
 - wherein said cut seal portion facilitates access to said article, and wherein said cutting apparatus (40) is fastened to said container (12).
2. (canceled)
3. (currently amended) The system of claim **[(2)]**¹, wherein said first edge **[(44)]** defines a slideable abutment structure and said second edge **[(48)]** defines a backstop.

4. (currently amended) The system of claim 3, wherein said backstop **[(48)]** includes a seating compartment (64) which receives and seats said cutting member **[(60)]**.

5. (currently amended) The system of claim 4, wherein said cutting member **[(60)]** is stabilized and bound by a securing member **[(66)]**.

6. (currently amended) The system of claim 5, wherein said cutting edge **[(62)]** projects away from said backstop **[(48)]** and extends into a relief nick **[(46)]** integral to said slideable abutment structure.

7. (previously presented) A method of providing and opening encased articles, comprising:

- providing a combination container and seal cutting apparatus;
- inserting a plurality of articles into said container, wherein said articles are encased within individual protective seals;
- distributing said container with articles and seal cutting apparatus to an end-user;
- removing a first article from said container;
- inserting at least a portion of said first article's protective seal into said seal cutting apparatus;
- operating said seal cutting apparatus to cut said portion of seal; and,
- retrieving said article from said protective seal wherein said cutting apparatus is fastened to said container.